

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1321

As Passed House:
February 24, 1999

Title: An act relating to requiring stops at intersections with nonfunctioning signal lights.

Brief Description: Requiring stops at intersections with nonfunctioning signal lights.

Sponsors: Representatives Ericksen, Fisher, K. Schmidt, Mitchell, Rockefeller, Carrell and McDonald; by request of Department of Transportation and Washington State Patrol.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/2/99, 2/8/99 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/24/99, 88-10.

Brief Summary of Bill

- An intersection with a nonfunctioning light is treated as an all-way stop.
- Vehicles then proceed in accordance with current law - vehicle on the left yields to the vehicle on the right, and vehicle preparing to turn left yields to on-coming traffic.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Fisher, Democratic Co-Chair; K. Schmidt, Republican Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic 1st Vice Chair; Edwards, Democratic 2nd Vice Chair; Ericksen, Republican Vice Chair; Hankins, Republican Vice Chair; Buck; G. Chandler; DeBolt; Haigh; Hurst; Lovick; McDonald; Mielke; Mitchell; Murray; Ogden; Pflug; Radcliff; Romero; Schindler; Schual-Berke; Scott and Wood.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Hatfield and Morris.

Staff: Mary McLaughlin (786-7309).

Background:

The basic right of way rule for a vehicle approaching an intersection is that when two vehicles from different roads approach an unmarked intersection at the same time, the vehicle on the left yields to the vehicle on the right. The right of way rule for a vehicle turning left is that the vehicle intending to turn left must yield to the vehicle approaching from the opposite direction. There appears to be some confusion as to who has the right of way when proceeding through an intersection with a traffic control device that is not functioning.

Summary of Bill:

An intersection with a nonfunctioning light is treated as an all-way stop. Except when directed to proceed by a flagger, police officer or firefighter, a driver of a vehicle approaching an intersection whose traffic signal is not functioning must stop and yield the right of way in compliance with the basic right of way rule for: (1) a vehicle approaching an intersection, and (2) a vehicle turning left at an intersection. The red/yellow/green traffic signal is specified to preclude having to stop at an intersection with a control beacon or other traffic control device.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Clarifying the procedures to be followed when approaching an intersection with a nonfunctioning light will help reduce the number of accidents occurring at these intersections. An education program will make the public aware of the new law.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Toby Rickman, Washington State Department of Transportation; and Captain Eric Robertson, Washington State Patrol.